

# Tips for Attending Remote Hearings-Family Court

Courts are closed because of the COVID-19 or coronavirus pandemic. Your court hearing may be held remotely. This means that you will participate by phone or by video conference instead of coming to the courthouse. Here are some tips on how to prepare.

## How do I know if I have a remote hearing?



The Court will contact you to tell you that your hearing is remote. They may contact you by sending you an email, letter in the mail, or by calling you.

## How do I take part in a remote hearing?

The Court will give you step-by-step instructions on how to take part in the remote hearing. If you lose your written notice, call the Family Court for instructions at:



(202) 879-1212

## Is there anything that I should do before the day of the hearing?

- Let the court know immediately if you cannot join a hearing because you do not have a phone or computer.

- You may want to contact an attorney for legal help.



Call the Family Law Assistance Network at (202) 844-5428 to see if you qualify for a free lawyer for your case, or

The Family Court Self Help Center at (202) 879-0096 for legal information

- You can also find the list of legal services providers at [dcourts.gov/coronavirus](https://dccourts.gov/coronavirus) by clicking on the link that says "List of Legal Service Providers for Those Without an Attorney."

- Evidence: if you want the judge to review photos or documents, ask the judge how to submit your evidence.

- Witnesses: tell the judge if you want a witness to testify at your hearing.

- Accommodations & Language Access: let the court know if you need an interpreter or other accommodation for your hearing.



## Tips for the Hearing

- Join the hearing a few minutes early!
- Charge your computer or phone and make sure you have enough minutes to join the call. Find a private and quiet space. If possible, be alone in a room during the hearing. Try to limit distractions as much as possible. If others are in the room with you, ask if they can be quiet during the hearing.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Mute all sounds on your phone or computer.
- Say your name before you speak so the record is clear. Be prepared to identify your role in the hearing (e.g., observer, plaintiff, defendant, witness, etc.).
- Speak slowly and clearly so everyone hears what you are saying.
- Pause before speaking in case there is a lag. Use a headset or headphones, if you can. This will free up your hands and sound better.
- Try not to talk over anyone else. Only one person can speak at a time. If you talk while someone else is talking, the judge will not be able to hear you.
- Have all your documents for the hearing in front of you.
- Have a pen and paper to take notes.
- If you are not ready for your hearing or want to speak with an attorney, you can ask the judge to postpone your hearing for another date.
- If your hearing is in a confidential case, like Adoption, Neglect, Juvenile or Parentage and Support, no one should be in the room with you at the time of the hearing. If you want to have someone in the room with you, you should ask the judge's permission to do so.



- If your sound or video freezes during the hearing, use the chat feature or call the Clerk's Office to let them know that you are having technical issues.

## Special Tips for Video Hearings

[\(Click here for more information\)](#)

- Download the court's hearing software, WebEx, in advance and do a test run! The Court will provide you with a WebEx link in advance of the hearing.
- Set up the camera at eye level. If you are using your phone, prop it up so you can look at it without holding it.
- Look at the camera when you speak and avoid moving around on the video.
- Wear what you would normally wear to court.
- Sit in a well-lit room with no bright lights behind you.
- If possible, find a blank wall to sit in front of. Remember the judge will be able to see everything on your screen, so pick a location that is not distracting.

